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RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 0921
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1361
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000472

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO FAA AHARRIS,
TRANSPORTATION TO FAA
STATE PASS TO OPIC
DAKAR PASS TO FAA REP MOIRA KEANE
ROME PASS TO TSA REP JOHN HALINSKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2018
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [EINV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ACCUSATIONS OF GROUND CREW MALFEASANCE AT
LAGOS AIRPORT

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

11. (C) Summary. On November 17, Robert Bryan and Michael McTighe (strictly protect), executives with Delta and Arik Air respectively, said ground crews fueling aircraft at Lagos' Murtala Mohammed International Airport have attempted to short change them on fuel, loading less fuel onto airplanes than requested and charging the airline for the full fuel load. Arik Air's executive said his company has videotaped ground crew attempting to load unauthorized pallets of baggage onto a domestic flight, and both executives expressed their concern about plans to bus connecting passengers between international and domestic terminals. Fuel prices remain high while fuel quality and availability are erratic. While we know of no specific safety incidents in Nigeria resulting from these practices, short changing aircraft on fuel and unplanned additional cargo raise a variety of safety and security concerns on top of the transparency and corruption issues. End Summary.

Ground Crews Attempt To Under-Fuel Aircraft

12. (C) During an informal discussion with Econoff in Abuja on November 17, Robert Bryan, West Africa Manager for Delta Airlines, and Michael McTighe, Managing Director for Arik Air both complained about corruption in fueling operations at Lagos' Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA). Both executives said their pilots have caught discrepancies between the amount of fuel actually loaded onto the aircraft and the fuel load the fuel truck tanker driver claimed to have loaded onto the aircraft. Ground crew fueling aircraft routinely tamper with gauges on their trucks to attempt to short change aircrews on fuel while collecting the money for the amount that should have been loaded onto the aircraft. Bryan and McTighe claimed two Nigerian airlines, Sosolito and Chanchangi purchase their fuel for cash, implying the Nigerian airlines buy stolen fuel at a discount from the ground crews. The executives said their aircrews keep a careful eye out for any discrepancy in fuel loading.

13. (C) Bryan noted that local fuel providers refuse to adhere to pricing in international fuel contracts that Delta has with aviation fuel distributors worldwide. Both men say they have confronted executives of local fuel distributors with the charges of corruption and failure to adhere to contracts, but their complaints have been ignored. Bryan and McTighe noted that aviation fuel prices have not fallen in Nigeria from their summer record highs despite the decline in crude

oil prices. The quality and availability of aviation fuel remains erratic they said. Additionally, a runway closure at MMIA has dramatically increased taxi times for aircraft departing from MMIA's domestic terminal. McTighe said his aircraft, fuel efficient new generation Boeing 737s and Bombardier CRJs, burn an additional 150 to 300 kilos of fuel per flight just taxiing from the domestic terminal to the runway.

Planned Airport Bus Connection Called Unsafe

¶4. (C) Both executives derided as unsafe plans by airport authorities to move passengers between the international and domestic terminals using buses traveling on active taxiways. McTighe said Arik Air refused to participate in a similar plan to bus boarding passengers from the new MMIA domestic terminal to its aircraft parked at a nearby ramp, saying that the buses lacked two way radio communications with the control tower and also that the drivers were not properly trained.

Baggage Handlers Try To Load Unauthorized Cargo

¶5. (C) McTighe related that his company caught two baggage handlers attempting to load additional pallets of baggage onto a domestic flight departing MMIA for an unnamed city in Nigeria. According to McTighe, security cameras filmed the baggage handlers surreptitiously pulling two luggage carts up to the aircraft; other baggage handlers and ground crew were

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otherwise occupied with a passenger loading procedure in which passengers identify their checked bags and turn over oversized carry-on bags for check-in and did not notice the two errant ground crewmen. The two baggage handlers were stopped before they could load the unauthorized baggage onto the aircraft and they told authorities a Nigerian businessman had bribed them to ship the bags to his destination. The baggage was reportedly nothing more than personal goods and consumer items the businessman had bought in Lagos. McTighe noted that with dozens of flights per day, he worried about the incidents they don't catch, particularly at smaller airports in Nigeria.

¶6. (C) Comment: Beyond the obvious security concerns these incidents raise, improper fuel and cargo loads are a serious flight safety issue. The weight and positioning of fuel and cargo are critical safety of flight parameters. Although we are unaware of any accidents caused by improper aircraft loading in Nigeria, it has been the cause aviation accidents elsewhere. Delta and Arik aircraft are crewed by well-trained and experienced pilots who know to check and recheck fuel and baggage loads, especially in Lagos. What happens on Nigeria's other, smaller airlines is another matter. End Comment.

¶7. (U) This cable cleared with Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR